

# Editorial

## Vision for the Church

It was a magnificent building – 18th century, and superbly maintained. The chancel area and roof were breathtaking. The horse-shoe gallery swept round in a graceful curve. The nave and aisles were awe-inspiring. My wife and I entered and sat down. Though our entry increased the congregation by about one fifth, one would have thought we were unwelcome intruders. No one smiled or spoke or showed us to a seat. The man at the door stared through us. The other half dozen worshippers were engrossed with their own meditations.

A magnificent organ led the praise. But it was a recital, because no one sang, or if they did, their singing hadn't a chance of competing with the echoing reverberations. The minister was arrayed in robes, preaching bands and academic hood. He preached as to a full church. Apparently the gallery was full, and the church packed with a rapturous congregation hanging on his every word. At least that was the impression he gave. The ten of us present apparently didn't matter. His attention was focused on the vast gathering of people who weren't there.

After an hour of dumb spectating, my wife and I slipped out into the warm sunshine of a July day, and asked ourselves what relevance the church service had had to the city and its people.

### Looking for a church

It's a salutary experience to be in a strange city, and to be free to visit several churches. It forces one into asking some serious questions such as, "What would I look for in a church?" or, "Could I take drums and electric guitars every Sunday morning?" or, "What impact is this congregation having on the community in which it is situated?"

As we approach the 21st century, where are we going in the Church? What message are we sending out to the non church-goer by our worship and witness? What relevance have we to the young people at senior school, to the unemployed teenager at the street in the coffee bar or pub, to the young married couple struggling with their first mortgage, to the man passing through mid-life crisis, to the elderly lady who is now too frail to get out to church?

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What message goes out silently from our church building and its noticeboard each day and week? How do people see us – the local medical centre and its group practice, the principals of the local schools, the shops, businesses and homes on our doorstep? What is their perception of us?

Think about a church that was quite dynamic. The impact it was making on the community was profound. Its influence throughout the whole city was enormous. The ripples from its epicentre were already reaching right across the known world.

Times have changed. We all know that. Where churches were once well-attended, in many cases they are now threatened with closure. Most cities and towns are using former church buildings as warehouses or garages. But why turn to the account of the church in apostolic times summarised in Acts 2:42–47? Embedded in its story are principles that can never change. It is those timeless principles we must identify and then, having identified them, seek to apply them to our own congregations.

### **The church must be a learning church**

*They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching...*

Today, most people are bored with books. We have become accustomed to "sound bites". Watch television for ten minutes to see how we are conditioned to have the picture changing, the voice changing, the subject changing. It's hard for us to sit and listen for more than a few minutes to the same person speaking on the same subject.

The result is that many in the church are suggesting the sermon is outdated and preaching obsolete. They want discussion, panels of people offering their opinions, or else Bible Studies which are nothing more than pooled ignorance. That is the relativism that is affecting us today. Knowledge today is controlled by pushing buttons. You sit in front of a computer and simply elicit from it ready made answers. Powers of reasoning and learning are being threatened by the revolution in

technology. But we cannot retreat. This is a bullet we must bite because in all our churches is a pulpit which stands for teaching and learning – by the spoken word.

The early church was apparently hungry to learn. Early Christians devoted themselves to learning. Learning what? The apostles' teaching was founded on the understanding that the Old Testament Scriptures had been fully and finally fulfilled in Jesus Christ. All their preaching and teaching was directed to show how the destiny of the world and the will of God for humankind lay in Jesus Christ, and in His death and resurrection.

Unless our churches face this issue, we are in increasingly serious trouble. We must take it head on – the church must always be a learning church. People must be taught to listen and to learn as they listen. They must learn about God and His Son, about His purpose for men and women, about our failures and His remedy for us, and about the doctrines of grace.

### **The church must be a committed church**

*They devoted themselves to the fellowship...*

When I went to Ireland to be minister of a Presbyterian Church there the very first aspect of Irish church life that struck me was the far higher level of commitment of the eldership compared to Scotland. I had been accustomed to elders attending church once on Sunday, and to many attending church only occasionally when they were on duty. We had had many "passengers" on both of my former Kirk Sessions.

But I found a Kirk Session of 72 elders with only one passenger, and at least he was regularly in Church on Sunday mornings, and attended about half the Kirk Session meetings. The other elders put the Church next to their families in their order of priorities. I discovered why.

They saw commitment to the church as expressing their commitment to Jesus Christ. Indeed, they could only understand commitment to Jesus Christ

### ***They saw commitment to the church as expressing their commitment to Jesus Christ***

in terms of commitment to His Church. Their reasoning was that the Church is the Body of Christ. Put another way, the Church *is* Jesus Christ in the community. To be committed to Jesus Christ means being committed to His church.

### **The church must be a worshipping church**

*They devoted themselves to the breaking of bread...*

This is a necessary extension of commitment to Christ and the fellowship. While in the Lord's Supper we look back to His death for us, and look forward to His return – for as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup ye do show forth the Lord's death until He come – there is also a present dimension to the Supper which involves us being united in Christ as a body of His people. The *one loaf* is emphasised by Paul. (1 Cor. 10:16f: *And is not the bread that we break a participation in the Body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf*).

I wonder if the Lord's Supper is as real and uniting as it ought to be. Have we learned, not only to participate in Christ, but to participate together in Christ, so that we are drawn together in adoration and worship in a sense which is both dynamic and far reaching in its effects?

### **The church must be a praying church**

*They devoted themselves to prayer...*

The genius who thought up the Woman's Guild, Sunday Schools, and the plethora of organisations we have today hadn't yet been born. The only two gatherings we find in the apostolic church were Worship (with the Word of God being taught and praise being sung),

and the Prayer Gathering. Because prayer is not an accessory like the lady's gloves and handbag, it is absolutely basic to the church's life.

The Korean Church has doubled every ten years this century. One notable difference between churches in Korea and churches in the UK is this: there, the only organisations other than Sunday Schools, are House Groups for fellowship and Bible study. The prayer meeting is held 365 days a year at 4am. Students of Church growth are convinced the reason for the amazing growth of the church in Korea is that intercessory prayer has been built into the very warp and woof of the church's life.

Have our elders given the lead in this in our congregations? Have we sought by example and by direction to give prayer the highest priority in our fellowships? Where else can such a lead come from except from those who lead?

### **The church must be a caring church**

*...they gave to anyone as he  
had need...*

I remember as a student in London hitch-hiking home to Arbroath one Christmas. Lifts were slow and I ended up in Carlisle after midnight with nowhere to go. The snow was falling and the ground white. I looked for a boarding house, but everything was shut up for the night. I was desperately cold, dressed in my ex-navy duffle coat and carrying my small suitcase. The streets were deserted and without cars or pedestrians.

Then I passed a home where there was a family party going on. The house was right on the street without any front garden. The large Victorian front room was filled with people wearing paper hats from crackers. A fire was roaring in the grate, and in one corner was a table groaning with food, left over from a more than abundant supper. I lingered, peeping in through the half drawn curtains. Everyone was laughing and chatting.

I have never been so envious in all my life. I longed to ring the bell and say,

"Could you give me a little corner to sit in? I'll not be any trouble, I promise. Just let me find shelter for a few minutes from the snow and freezing temperatures. And maybe just one sandwich, because I am ravenously hungry. Please". But with a heavy heart, I turned away and continued along the road north to Scotland, alone and without a friend in that town. It was just after 5am that a milk lorry picked me up half dead from the cold.

Our churches ought to be like that family party, with this one massive difference: standing at the open door of the house, there ought to be someone saying to passers-by, "Come in and welcome!" There are many travellers on life's journey who are lonely and lost, far more than we would think. Do they long to slip in to share the warmth, and eat the spiritual food for which they hunger?

Or do they see a shut door — is that their perception? They're afraid they wouldn't be welcome because, like me with my suitcase and duffle coat, they wouldn't conform or have an accepted place? They know they are not really part of the family. So they stay away.

A recent census of 5000 Christians showed that 80% had come to faith through being attracted to a warm, loving fellowship. The power of a caring church to draw others to Christ has never really been appreciated by Christians of our generation. We are too concerned with survival. Our objective is to pay the bills, keep the roof on and the place in good repair. We are not concerned enough with Biblical principles of practical caring and working them out in our street and community.

### **The church must be a praising church**

*...praising God...*

This is a sensitive area because the hymns and conduct of worship are the sole responsibility of the minister. Nonetheless, I want to make one or two comments about our praise.

First, has leadership realised how important praise is in any service of worship, and is that realisation reflected in the church's budget? Does the

minister have the resources needed? We'll not get people coming back to a church where the singing is dull and insipid. But where the praise is powerful and spiritual, people will be touched and be hungry for more.

Second, praise is primarily with the mind, secondarily with the will, and thirdly with the emotions. The error of some fellowships is to base the praise on an emotional surge. That works for a year or two, but, as with all emotionally based exercises, it soon grows stale and the minister is under pressure to produce more exciting emotional rabbits out of the hat. A fellowship can become quite extreme and even deviate from sanity in its effort to keep the worship fresh and the congregation "happy".

No. God has created us rational beings. Dogs have emotions, yet they don't have minds to praise God. But we do. And the depth of our praise will be in direct proportion to the depth of our understanding of what God has done for us in Christ.

Therefore, we will not use slush or pap in our praise. Some modern praise hymns are, frankly, too shallow to be used. There must be good theological content in the hymns we use. Our hymns must affirm our faith, and must challenge us to new understanding. We praise with our minds.

## *Of course emotion is involved*

Of course, emotions are involved. But never forget that love in Biblical terms is an act of the will and an act of obedience. Christian love is strong, robust, durable, Godlike. Do not confuse love and emotion. Get emotion in its right place. Do not let society's false standards degrade our attitude to praise.

# This church was a credible church

## The church must be a growing church

*The Lord added to their number daily  
those who were being saved.*

It is true to say that in Scotland we are planning and working in the expectation that the Church will continue to decline significantly. It hits one like a blow in the solar plexus to see plans being made by church committees which assume the church's ultimate demise.

Have you ever read accounts of Napoleon's disastrous retreat from Moscow? As a boy, my blood used to run cold as I read of the Cossacks cutting down the starving French stragglers, gradually diminishing the might of Bonaparte's army until practically nothing was left. Our church planners have read and learned from that tragic event. So they are planning a much more orderly "retreat from Moscow". The aim, apparently, is to minimise the casualties. They want as many servants of the church safely pensioned off as possible. They want to close as many churches as they can in as fair and amicable a manner as possible. They want to present to the public the church's decline as rationalisation in the face of a changing culture.

In the city where I live congregations have declined by up to and over 50% during the past ten years. The situation is dire. What has gone wrong with the Biblical pattern of Church growth? No one seems to be planning for growth! In Acts 2:47, we read, the Lord added to the church daily those who were saved. Why not plan for church growth?

## Conclusion

There is one final point. Tucked away in various stories and texts of scripture, is a further principle almost lost today. It is the *authentication of the Church's witness by God Himself*. What do I mean? *Everyone was filled with awe...* (v.43). That cannot mean the church was filled with awe. It refers to the whole community. Again in v.47 we read:

*... enjoying the favour of all the people...*  
What is Luke saying? This church was a credible church!

The community saw them at work, witnessed their common life, observed all they were as transformed people, and realised that here was a fellowship of men and women on which the blessing of God was resting. Those looking on didn't all join them. But they knew that God was present among them.

We have to come with humble hearts and open minds to God's Word to ask how and why God ever authenticates a ministry and a congregation. Because, after we have done all we are able, unless the Lord of Hosts is with us, and *that is manifestly evident*, we are trawling in child birth but bringing forth only wind. If the blessing of God settles on a congregation, the nation will take note, and many will be coming to ask, "Why is God blessing you? What is your secret?" In the words of Zechariah, they will take hold of your coat and plead, "Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you!" And the blessing will ultimately extend far beyond the borders of your country, until it reaches across the whole world.

# The Biblical Qualifications for the Eldership

The second article on the Eldership by *Rev Eric J Alexander*

All our doctrinal foundations are in Holy Scripture, and that is therefore the charter from which the very existence of the eldership arises. 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus are often called the Pastoral Epistles because they deal with such themes as church order and the lives of those who are office bearers within the church. In considering the biblical qualifications for the eldership, I want to base my comments on 1 Timothy 3:1-7.

<sup>1</sup>Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. <sup>2</sup>Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, <sup>3</sup>not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. <sup>4</sup>He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. <sup>5</sup>(If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's

church?) <sup>6</sup>He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgement as the devil. <sup>7</sup>He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.

In this passage (cf. Titus 1:6-9), we have a fairly detailed list of qualifications for the office of elder and I believe it is important for all who aspire to the eldership (v. 1) to be aware of and study these. For example, in v. 5 Paul sees the elder in a situation which is parallel to the manager of his own home. "If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?"

## Caretakers of God's church

The clear implication is that elders are called to take care of the church of God. Not, you will notice, *their* church but *God's* church. They are to be caretakers. We use the word of someone who is

taking care of another's property and in that sense the caretaker is self-evidently not the owner; the place he is looking after doesn't belong to him.

We have a lot of caretakers in the centre of the city of Glasgow where I minister and some time ago one of them was delighted to show me round a vast office building for which he was responsible. It was a most beautiful place. But every where we went he said to me, "Come and I'll show you my managing director's office ... Come and I'll show you my boardroom ... Come and see my general office ...". He talked as if the whole building belonged to him!

We have to be careful not to slide into that kind of attitude towards the church. All too often many office-bearers tend to speak and think like that office caretaker. But we must recognise afresh that the church of which we are caretakers is God's church and not ours. It is God's church in that he has a particular love for it having purchased it with the blood of His Son.

We are to understand that he has ordained and appointed elders in order to express through them the profound care he has for the church. It is as though God is taking this extraordinarily

precious possession of his and saying, “Care for this for me.”

Can you imagine the Crown Jewels being entrusted to you and some high officer of state saying, “Will you look after these for me?” Imagine it – you would drop everything you were doing and you would do all you possibly could in order to discharge such a commission faithfully. Do we not realise that the living God has presented to us what are going to be the jewels in his crown on the Last Day? For the church of his only begotten Son is nothing less than his “crown jewels”. And he says to you and me, “Care for that for me!”

We should not therefore be surprised that God gives to us extraordinary qualifications for the eldership. We would expect him to be exceedingly careful about this when he has bought this church with the blood of Christ.

He is continuing to build his church through the work of Christ in our generation and he is beautifying it by the work of the Holy Spirit so that one day it may appear in all its glory. Can you understand why the qualifications for the church’s “caretakers” are of such a profoundly challenging nature?

## Qualifications

I want to consider these qualifications under six areas of living. Please don’t think I am trying to compartmentalise them. I am simply identifying them under six headings for the sake of clarity.

### 1. The elder’s personal life

Paul comes to the elder’s personal life as the first priority in v. 2 where he says, “Now the overseer must be above reproach”. That simply means that the primary qualification for Christian leadership in the church is not that we are greatly gifted or well educated but that we have a consistent personal character. That is the first and the last thing that Paul writes about. Notice in v. 7, “He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil’s trap”. So the primary emphasis is on the elder’s personal life, “above reproach” amongst those who are around him

within the fellowship and of “good reputation” amongst those who are outside the church of Christ, that is in the world.

Paul spells that out in a little more detail in v. 2, for example, where he speaks about the need to be “temperate, self-controlled, respectable” (or *orderly*) and so on. And one of the places where that *self-control* will reveal itself, says Paul (v. 3) is in the use of alcohol – “...not given to drunkenness”. (Cf. v. 8 where the same standard is set forth for deacons).

The whole of this interest in Christian character is quite fundamental. It is for this reason that the general testimony of Scripture is that my usefulness in the service of God is closely tied in with my personal character, so that what *I am* matters to God more than what *I do*. Inner consistency in my own life is therefore going to be the crucial thing in my usefulness. That is why when Peter is speaking about the task of the shepherd he says elders must be examples to the flock of God (1 Peter 5:3). That is why when writing to young Timothy, Paul tells him not to mind about his age but to be an example: “Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity” (1 Tim. 4:12). The point is that men and women are going to be far more impressed by what we are than by what we say or do. That is why the primary area in this study must be our personal lives.

### 2. The elder’s domestic world

“The overseer must be ... the husband of but one wife” (v.2). Much discussion has arisen about what is intended by this requirement. However, I think the most obvious meaning is likely to be the most accurate, namely, that the one who is being called to the eldership will need to be an example in the realm of the biblical norm of absolute faithfulness within the marriage bond. I believe that is what Paul has in mind here. He is referring to an exclusive, permanent, loving relationship between one man and one woman.

Paul goes on to elaborate on this

domestic issue. A leader in the church of God must first prove himself to be a leader in his home who has gained the respect of his own family. “He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God’s church?” (vv. 4-5). Quite simply Paul is saying that our family life ought to be a microcosm of the church of Jesus Christ.

The children of such an elder should obey him because they respect his wisdom, his selfless care for his family and the quality of leadership and example which he is providing. This is a qualification for the eldership because that ought to be how he will act within the church of God. Paul’s point is that if he is not living like that within his own home there is very little likelihood that he will suddenly start to live like that within the church.

### 3. The elder’s relationships

The third area is that of human relationships beyond the home. “He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil’s trap” (v.7). Again in verse 2, “...not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome ...”. We all know that some people are peacebreakers rather than peacemakers. But the elder, on the contrary, must be *gentle*, meaning patient and forbearing with people – long-tempered not short-tempered.

That is extended not only to our dealings with people and our attitudes towards them, but also to our words when we speak about them. Notice v. 11: “In the same way, their wives are to be women worthy of respect, *not malicious talkers* but temperate and trustworthy in everything”. The issue of how we (and our wives) talk about other people is important enough to be a criterion for the eldership.

In our human relationships with those outwith the church we also need to be an example. We all know there are some people whose human relationships leave an enormous amount to be desired. It is

very damaging to the church when an elder has the reputation, within or outwith the church, for being a frosty, difficult, angular, obtuse character. Alas, there are such elders. Do you see how what they are doing is disgracing the name of Christ? The elder, the servant of God, says Paul, is to be gentle and that can only come from self-control.

#### 4. The elder's business life

Fourthly, we have the sphere of financial affairs. There are two places where Paul touches on this: "Not a lover of money ...not pursuing dishonest gain" (vv. 3 & 8), the second of which refers to deacons. The elder must be crystal clear about his motives in serving God and his people and financial gain must never be one of them.

Each of these two phrases makes a significant point. The first, "Not a lover of money" indicates that elders' attitudes towards money must be that of sitting so lightly to it that they have learned to live both with and without it. The second phrase, "not pursuing dishonest gain", takes that a step further and pleads for total integrity in all our financial dealings. (Note that although this comment here is under the category of qualifications for deacons, in Titus 1:7 the same phrase is one of the qualifications for elders.)

It is vital for us to learn this attitude of absolute integrity with regard to material things. Without such integrity, all we are teaching and saying will lack credibility.

#### 5. The elder's spiritual maturity

"He must not be a recent convert or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgement as the devil" (v.6). The Greek word *recent* suggests the meaning of *newly planted*. The force of this metaphor taken from nature is that a plant has to send its roots down deeply before it can produce fruit convincingly. If someone has only just come into the kingdom of God and only recently come to faith in Christ, that person ought to be allowed time in order to mature. Candidates for the eldership must first

prove themselves and demonstrate to the fellowship the reality of grace in their lives before they are placed in positions of leadership. That is what Paul is saying.

#### 6. The elder's teaching ability

This final qualification for the eldership of a teaching ability needs careful consideration. It is stated at the end of v. 2: "The overseer must be ... able to teach". Weymouth translates as "a gift for teaching".

The reason this is so important is that one of the chief ways in which leaders will care for God's family is by feeding the flock of God. That is the significance of Peter's words when he says to elders, "Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care" (1 Pet.5:2). What is the great task of the shepherd? The shepherd's task of course is to protect the sheep and to lead and guide them. But his most basic concern is to take them to good pastures – to feed them. Only as he ensures they have adequate pasture can they be nourished and mature and grow.

By the same token, our great task as under-shepherds of the flock of God is to take the flock to rich pastures. The clear implication is that the concern of the ministry will be about where the sheep are taken to be fed. This is why it is quite wrong to make a division between a pastoral ministry and a preaching ministry. We have all heard it said of some minister: "He is a great pastor but a dreadful preacher!" That is a distortion, it is ridiculous. The pastor is literally the shepherd because "pastor" means "shepherd".

As we have just seen, the shepherd's chief task is to take the flock to the place where they will be fed. Therefore we cannot say, "Oh, he is a great pastor – he goes and visits them and says 'Nice sheep', you know". That is not what the pastor is at all! The pastor's task is to ensure that they are fed.

Therefore every elder, whether his ministry is public teaching or of a different sort, ought to be supremely burdened that the flock are being fed. This means that when I go into the homes of my people I ought to be concerned to know that the word of

God, in whatever way it is being ministered to them, is being taken in, understood and applied to their lives. Someone is going to ask, "But how can this be true for someone who is not a teaching elder?" *Able to teach* is included here by Paul because there will always be people in the congregation who will say, "I couldn't understand what the minister was saying on Sunday". It is then the elder's task to say, "Can I help you? What was it that you couldn't grasp? Let's look together again at the Bible passage the sermon was on. I will try and help you to understand the points you couldn't grasp". *Able to teach*. It may well be that the elder has an aptitude for explaining and teaching in that one to one situation which is greater than the aptitude of the one who is doing the public preaching. That is of enormous importance.

#### Prayer

There is one other qualification for the eldership which isn't included in the passage from 1 Timothy on which this study has been largely based. We find it tucked away in a comment James makes in his letter. I am referring to the verse about those who are sick: "Is anyone of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him ..." (Jas.5:14f).

Most people who are interested in what James writes here are concerned about the question of divine healing. But it is easy to miss a much more fundamental truth which points to a further qualification for elders hidden away here. "Is anyone among you sick? He should call for the elders ..." Why should the sick person call for the elders? Not because they are doctors. Not because they have some divine gift of healing. But because the person who is sick needs to be prayed for.

Who are the praying people in the congregation? The elders! This is what will distinguish them — they will be praying people. That is perhaps the greatest qualification and it is certainly the most fundamental need within any fellowship of God's people. The minister who as teaching elder does not pray

might as well not bother ministering. The elder, who is a ruling elder, who does not pray has disembowelled his ministry because this is the cardinal thing.

### Conclusion

The standard set in the New Testament for the eldership is high. But as I said in my previous article, I believe it would be impossible to exaggerate the importance of the eldership for the sake not only of the local church but also of the national church. The issues concerning a biblical view of the eldership are quite crucial. As I pray for the revival of the churches in Scotland and beyond, I find myself

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# Who are the praying people in the congregation? *The Elders!*

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increasingly praying for the reformation of our view of the eldership.

*Editor's Note:*

*Both this and the earlier article on Eldership are edited versions of an address given by the Rev. Eric Alexander at a Rutherford House conference some eight years ago.*



# SERMON

by John Chrysostom

*Chrysostom (347-407) was nicknamed “the golden mouthed one” on account of his exceptional ability to use language persuasively. His preaching was expository and he covered whole books of the Bible in series of consecutive sermons. For example, he preached on Genesis, Psalms, Matthew, John and the Pauline epistles and all these series are extant. One feature of his preaching which will be observed in the sermon below is its highly practical nature. It is certainly not short on application! Note also that he did not follow the Alexandrine practice of allegorising.*

## Concerning the laws of God

*“God was walking in the Garden in the cool of the day”*

Genesis 3:8

We take up the subject we were considering yesterday. Indeed, this subject has required of us several days in succession! It has demanded a continuous effort of the memory. Today we deal with an aspect we left out yesterday. What was it we had not time to deal with yesterday? It was these words, *God was walking*

*in Paradise in the cool of the day.*

## Bringing the guilty to their senses

What is meant by this expression, I ask? God was walking! God was not walking! How could God be walking when he is present everywhere and fills all things? But he caused Adam to have this perception of himself in order that he might come to his senses and not be heedless. God’s purpose was that when Adam ran to hide himself, he might admit before ever he spoke to God some measure of his guilt before ever any words had passed between them.

It was similar to the case of those who are brought before the Tribunal in court. As they prepare to answer for the crimes they have committed, they appear before the authorities with squalid, subdued, sad and begrimed faces. They present themselves in this way to try and give the impression of hopelessness and to provoke in their judges some degree of compassion and mercy. This is how it was with Adam. It was necessary that he be brought before the divine Tribunal

in a subdued state. Therefore God came on him first to humble him.

### **The effects of guilt**

We should notice that Adam became aware that someone was walking in the Garden. But how did he come to suppose it was God who was walking there? The reason lies in the fact that those who have committed some sin are suspicious of everything. They are afraid even of shadows. Every little sound startles them. They imagine that everyone who approaches has some hostile design upon them. Often, then, those who are guilty when they see others busy about some quite unrelated matter assume that it is themselves who are about to be confronted. And when people are deep in conversation on some totally unrelated topic, the guilty are sure that their wrong-doing is the subject of the conversation.

### **The nature of sin**

This is the very nature of sin: it betrays the sinner when no one actually knows anything about the sin. It condemns when no one is accusing. It causes the sinner to be afraid even of the slightest sound. Indeed, sin has exactly the opposite effect of righteousness!

The Scriptures describe for us the cowardice of the sinner on the one hand and the boldness of the righteous on the other hand. "The wicked run away when no one is pursuing". Why do the wicked run away when no one is pursuing? Because that have that within which drives them on – a guilty conscience! They carry their guilt everywhere. Just as it would be impossible for them to run from themselves, so they cannot run away from the accusing voice within. Wherever the guilty go, they are chastised and have as it were an open wound.

### **An example of righteousness**

But the righteous are totally different. In what way are they different? The Word says: "The righteous are bold as a lion!" Take Elijah as an example. Ahab came towards him and challenged him, "Why are you troubling Israel?" But he answered, "It is not me who is troubling Israel, but you and your family". Righteous Elijah was indeed as bold as a lion. He stood firm against the king as a lion would stand against some miserable dog. The king was dressed in royal purple while Elijah was dressed in the sheepskin of a peasant. But which was the more noble of the two garments? That purple robe had caused a terrible drought, whereas the peasant garb had effected a deliverance from the famine. That coat of Elijah's was the means of dividing the waters of the Jordan, and causing a double portion of his spirit to come upon Elisha.

How great is the virtue of the godly. Not only their words, not only their bodies, but even their very garments are esteemed by creation itself! This sheepskin cloak divided the waters of a river! The sandals of three righteous men trod down the heat of the fiery furnace! The rod of Moses divided the Red Sea and brought forth water from the rock!

## ***The righteous are bold as a lion***

The garments of Paul cured diseases! The shadow of Peter banished death!

### **Holiness bestows authority**

Even today, the ashes of the holy martyrs drive away demons! This is why the saints act with authority, as Elijah did. He was not intimidated by the king's crown, nor by his outward pomp. But he looked on Ahab's inner soul and saw it was clothed in rags and was squalid and filthy and in a worse condition than any common felon. Seeing that the king was the prisoner and slave of his passions, Elijah despised his power.

Elijah appears to have seen the king as merely a play actor. What advantage was there in worldly wealth when there was such spiritual poverty and destitution in this man? As for Elijah, what harm was there in his own material poverty when he had such spiritual treasure within?

### **Bolder than a lion**

The apostle Paul was also a "lion" of a man. As he was incarcerated in the prison and merely lifted his voice to sing, he shook the very foundations, breaking his fetters, not with his teeth, but with nothing more powerful than his words! When we consider such exploits, we see that really to call such spiritual giants "lions" is hardly appropriate because lions can be captured by a net and made prisoners. Whereas the saints of God when they are taken prisoner become even more powerful, as Paul became when he was made a prisoner and ended up not only setting all the other prisoners free but even completely overcoming the jailer by the word of the Gospel.

The lion roars and sends the beasts of the forest running for cover. But the holy ones of God speak and the very demons are driven back. A lion's weaponry consists in its noble mane, its claws and its teeth. But the weapons of the righteous are spiritual wisdom, self-control, patience and total disregard of this present age and all it offers. Those who have such spiritual weapons will not only defy the wicked, but also will have the authority to defy the powers of darkness.

Adhere steadfastly to a life of obedience to God and no one will ever overcome you. Even though in the eyes of the world you are considered of no account, you will be more powerful than any. However, if you are careless about inner purity, even if you have great influence in worldly terms, you will have no defence against those who choose to turn against you. I have already made this point.

If you are willing to hear me, I shall now proceed to demonstrate to you that the righteous are invincible while sinners are vulnerable. The Psalmist expresses it thus: "The ungodly are like the chaff which the wind drives away from the face of the earth". Just as chaff when exposed to the wind is easily caught up and swept along, so are sinners driven here and there by every temptation that comes their way.

## *Those who have committed some sin are suspicious of everything ... they are afraid even of shadows.*

For while such sinners may struggle with themselves, what hope of security and peace have they when their consciences forever accuse them like some mortal foe?

### **You cannot defeat a mountain**

Consider how different the righteous are. The Psalmist says of them, "Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion". You ask, "What does he mean that they are like Mount Zion?" He tells us: "They shall never be shaken". He means that whatever siege engines are brought against the defences of the righteous, whatever darts or arrows are hurled, you will never overthrow a mountain! You cannot defeat a mountain! The thing is impossible. You'll end up breaking all your siege engines and exhausting all your paltry resources. So it is with the righteous – they are similarly invincible. Whatever blows they may receive, no lasting injury can be inflicted on them. You have heard of the case of Job. Satan had to give up his assault on that "mountain" and retire with all his evil weaponry broken and his arrows all spent.

### **No price to pay**

Now how about ourselves? Are we still set on worldly wealth that perishes? Turn from the earthly glory that fades, from trust in these bodies and their transient beauty that one day will fail and from sinful pleasures that are fleeting. Be concerned about your souls and work to provide for their eternal welfare. Don't you see that you can't cure ailing mortal bodies. But there is an instant cure for immortal souls. Bodies that are diseased need medicines which cost money. But there is no price that we have to pay to have our souls made well. Surgery can be painful as the scalpel cuts deep into the flesh. But God has provided in his kindness an easy cure for the soul which only demands our willing response.

Remember too that however much trouble you go to heal the body, death will ultimately come and cannot be avoided. It doesn't matter how much you spend or what physicians you employ, nor how much anguish the supposed cures cause, if we neglect our souls, all is lost. Remember that eternity is coming. If we deliberately neglect our souls and fail to choose to care for eternal values, then we shall sustain eternal loss and be liable to inexorable penalties.

What would you think of someone who promised to teach you the art of healing in a short space of time at no cost and without any effort? Would you not gladly meet such a person's simple requirements to gain such knowledge? But can't you see that here is something far better: without effort on your part, there is a way to heal your soul and without any pain to restore it to spiritual health! Such a prospect demands our attention.

### **The spiritual cure**

We must begin this spiritual cure by forgiving those who have offended us. Surely it doesn't cause pain to recall the wrongs that have been against you and to resolve to forgive and be reconciled. God is ready and willing to give. Is it hard work to come to him in prayer and simply to ask from his hand.

And take the matter of hurtful talk which grieves another – is it hard to desist from that? And what about being delivered from ill-will against another? How about loving your neighbour – is that any trouble for you? Will it hurt you not to utter shameful words, not to revile or insult another? Will it tire you out if you stop cursing?

### **Fires of anger allowed to burn on**

Let's think about cursing and oaths uttered in anger. The truth is, swearing an oath can actually be very hard work! Often when full of anger, we have sworn we would never ever forgive those who have hurt us. But then later, when our wrath has subsided, we have actually suffered very deeply because we have been imprisoned by the resolve we made when we were furious! The devil knows that when the sudden heat of temper has died down, our anger can easily be extinguished and so he works to keep our anger alive by ensnaring us into foolish oaths. And having promised ourselves we would never forgive, we find ourselves bound by that obligation and so the fires of anger keep burning in us. As a result we actually work at cherishing ill-will.

Knowing this, let us avoid curses and foolish oaths. When our tongues have been brought under discipline, they learn to be ashamed and to blush, to utter ugly and disgraceful words. If we have the testimony that we habitually avoid oaths, then that in itself will be a safeguard. For those who know us would be astonished to hear tongues that are normally under control speaking out of turn and disgracing us with shameful expressions.

### **A final appeal**

This is the sixth day in succession that I am admonishing you, my people, regarding this teaching of Scripture that God walked in the Garden in the cool of the day. I want us now to take leave of this subject because you are now thoroughly on your guard. What excuse can there be for you? If indeed I had never spoken on this matter, and you had never heard this teaching, yet still it should have come to you because it is actually so obvious and is not difficult to grasp.

But now you have enjoyed sermons on this for several days. You are left without excuse when you stand before the divine and dread Tribunal. Then, like Adam, you will be required to give an account of your transgression. It will be no use inventing excuses. Either we accept the healing God offers and mend our ways or we face punishment and will have to endure the most extreme penalties.

As you leave, will you give serious thought to what you have heard? Will you exhort one another? Will you keep in mind with watchfulness these things you have heard over these many days? By mutual instruction, exhortation and edification, will you seek to improve your behaviour so that you will hold fast to God's laws and one day enjoy the eternal crown? God grant that all of us may obtain this reward through the grace and steadfast love of our Lord Jesus Christ by whom and with whom be glory to the Father together with the Holy Spirit for ever and ever. Amen.

# CHOOSING HYMNS

Helen Killick

The subject of church music can arouse deep feelings in every congregation, in the pews and the choir, the organist, the instrumentalists and in the ministers as well. In their busy lives, ministers have a difficult job being in charge of music particularly if they do not feel suitably trained. It can seem easier to delegate the task to somebody else! For some, choosing the weekly hymn list is squeezed in to a short time when they come to type out an Order of Service for Sunday. In this article, I want to ask ministers whether music and choice of hymns is given proper place in their preparation for worship.

During the years I was a full-time director of music and organist in a Presbyterian Church, I became aware of the frustrations and impatience that ministers can feel as leaders who are responsible for worship in their congregations. I also acted as secretary to a working group producing a new hymn book,<sup>1</sup> and discovered then that frustration and impatience over music for worship are phenomena widely experienced among ministers. So many are keen for their churches to move on and are frustrated with the speed at which change takes place.

I have also worked for four years as a school chaplain responsible for worship with children aged 11 to 18 in a secondary school, and I am also aware of the frustration felt by young people with their churches and the impatience that they can feel with the leadership.

Now that I am no longer a Church organist but am sitting in the pew each Sunday, I am discovering the frustrations of the ordinary members which are quite different from the frustrations of the organist.

## *Why do hymns and church music evoke such strong reactions*

### **Why emotions run high**

Why do hymns and church music evoke such strong reactions amongst all sorts of people – young and old, musically trained, musically illiterate, ministers and congregations? Feelings run strongly for a number of reasons. Some of them are superficial but others go much deeper.

### **Congregational participation**

In normal reformed church services singing may be the only active way that members participate in the service; for most of the service they are listening to prayers, readings and sermons; it is only when they stand up to sing they feel that they have something to give. So the hymns become very valuable to people as personal expressions of their own faith.

For some members of our churches – toddlers and young children or people who have various learning disabilities – singing may be the only accessible part of the service, particularly if the language used in the pulpit is that of educated academic thought. This is the first reason I suggest why music arouses such strong feelings: it may be the only active way many people can actively participate.

### **Music evokes memories**

A second reason why music arouses strong feelings is that it can also evoke for some memories of loved ones or different places or another time in their lives. It may remind them of experiences that they had when they first became Christians, or when their faith became very real for them. The hymns that bring back such memories are clearly very important to them. People can become quite nostalgic about old hymns or old tunes.

It is a fact that we can remember words we have sung more readily than words we have spoken. Probably most of us remember a hymn we learned as a child at our mother's knee, which will go with us right into old age. Remembering songs we sang as children can make the words of those songs become important to us. This is certainly true of a lot of hymns we sing. Indeed, some of the hymns that are part of our regular repertoire are there for nostalgic reasons only. We all enjoy singing at Christmas "Away in a manger" but if you think of the words, are they actually true?

The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,  
But little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes...

What kind of baby would he be if he woke and never cried? I just wonder about the theology of the carol and its implications for Christ's humanity. But yet everyone loves singing it for nostalgic reasons.

### Christian identity affirmed

Thirdly, music is one way of people affirming their identity either as generation or as a group. Every generation has its own musical identity which helps to define its culture. That is true particularly of the youth culture: it is defined by a musical style. By always singing hymns in a traditional style we affirm the culture of an older generation. By including songs in a more modern vein, say Graham Kendrick songs, we affirm the musical culture of people who were young in the 60's and 70's when many were listening to the Beatles.

Presbyterians singing from the great repertoire of metrical psalms affirm the fact that they are a group with much in common. Just as supporters of one football team have songs that they sing on the terraces, so Presbyterians have sacred songs that affirm their identity within the reformed family of the people of God.

### Worship of God

Fourthly, it is by singing songs and hymns that we are engaging in an ancient and yet very immediate act of worship. We join with angels, saints, the church overseas and with neighbouring believers of other churches to give God what God is "worth". In "worthship" we are not on our own but are vitally joined with all God's people in heaven and all over the world. We might even go as far as to say that in worship heaven and earth come together. It is in singing and worshipping God through music that even those with short attention spans can be touched by God and so learn what he is like. It may be in the praise that the

disappointing sermon will be redeemed for those present.

Worshippers can give expression to what their minister was trying, but may have failed, to say through the sermon.

The same may well be true of others aspects of the service. Through hymns and singing people who find it hard to pray can express to God what it is they want to say.

### Meaning or emptiness?

When ministers come to the task of choosing the hymns for Sunday what they have before them is not a chore that has to be done every week but rather a challenge because in those hymns they have the potential to create unity in their congregation or else cause division. They have the potential for offering meaning in the worship or

man, or the packed lunch of a small boy in the middle of a big crowd. He will also accept our doubts<sup>2</sup>, our fears, our disappointments and our despair. We need to be able to offer all these to God – perhaps sometimes even our anger. If we don't we will become soured and our worship will be a pretence and we ourselves will be distant both from God and others because of our dissimulation.

Someone has defined worship as "where the word of God meets the experience of his people". Where people find that God's word has come alive in their lives, their response is to worship him.

### The people's needs

If we always choose the rousing hymns

## God is bigger than our limited imagination

else of serving up (for many) mere emptiness.

We need to look at patterns and models we are given for this hugely important task. I look to the book of Psalms, our Old Testament hymnbook. There we can glean some principles and see what we can do about these principles in our practice week by week.

### Honesty in Worship

The first principle is that worship should be honest. Honesty! When we look at the Psalms as a whole we see that the whole range of human emotion and experience is covered from exuberance and delight in God to questioning him, impatience with him, personal agony, loneliness and despair. Our relationship with God must be honest and the Psalms show us that our relationship with God *can be honest*.

They show that God accepts us with all our emotions just as the Lord Jesus accepted the gift of precious perfume from a young woman, or the offer of hospitality from a despised, lonely little

or those that exalt God (perhaps because we want hymns that make us feel good), we will be denying part of the needs of those in our congregations. Our choice must allow for the expression of a range of moods and emotions. Of course there is a place for hymns which stir us up in pure praise of God's glory and majesty and such psalms and hymns should come at the opening of worship – we must begin by looking upwards and outwards to the majesty and grace of God. But there is also a place for quiet reflection. There needs to be opportunity to express regret and godly sorrow. Some hymns might express our determination to change. Maybe a song will express our despair as we look at the world and its desperate plight.

### Sacrifice of personal taste

We must see to it that we meet the needs of the people in the congregation and this is where we may have to sacrifice our taste and choice and even our own feelings in order to minister

to our people through the singing. We have to come to know them so that we can work out where they are and what would be the most appropriate expression in songs for them. As we choose each hymn or psalm we need to think what purpose it has.

All this adds up to what I have called “honesty in worship”. I suppose I mean that our worship requires to reflect the whole spectrum of God’s grace in human experience. Our singing and praising must honour God and we learn this so clearly from the Psalms.

### Variety in Worship

The second principle concerns variety. As we look through the Psalms we may be struck by something that is often missed – the variety of types of song and instruments that are quoted. One of the pictures of God we see in Psalms is of a God who loves variety and who speaks to us through variety. Not just a variety of emotions and moods (as we have just noted) but also a variety of music. The Psalmist writes about “a new song”! While I know the theology of the “new song” is primarily directed towards God’s new work of grace in human hearts, we can also learn that new songs delight the heart of God. There is no need to sing only the old ones!

The Psalms invite us to sing both new and traditional songs. Often the old songs speak of the history of God’s people and remind us of another age, telling again the story of redemption. But there is no doubt that certain Psalms call us to sing new songs too.

Looking at the structure of the Psalms, think about the amazing variety: some were sung as corporate acts of worship; some were solos perhaps expressing the innermost feelings of the Psalmist; some have repeated refrains which were probably used as antiphons with soloist and congregation alternating in the singing<sup>3</sup>. Clearly there is variety in the way that each of these psalms would have been sung.

#### Variety of instruments

We could also list the instruments that

were undoubtedly used: trumpets, lutes, harps and cymbals and pipes and lyres etc.<sup>4</sup> What that tells us is that all kinds of instruments are valid in worship. I have seen bagpipes used in worship (though I admit that would not be everyone’s taste!) and I have seen accordions and tin whistles used. Anything that will make enable believers to sing to God can be used in worship. When we come to choose the hymns for Sunday, think about these things.

#### Variety of pace

The *pace* of the hymns also needs variety. They should not *all* be slow, majestic tunes. There may be a suitable tune that was originally a dance tune and will let people tap their feet. John and Charles Wesley had a great gift for seizing secular tunes like that and employing them appropriately in worship. The fact that many such hymns and their tunes have survived for two centuries bears witness to their quality and appropriateness for public worship of God. Of course there is a quiet, slower, more reflective type of tune that will help people to focus in on meditative words.

#### Styles and tunes

We also need to have a variety of *styles* of hymns and tunes. Traditional hymns should be used alongside newer hymns. There are some lovely old hymns which go to folk tunes (such as *Greensleeves* or *Ye Banks and Bries*). There are traditional tunes that go well to songs from the church overseas – maybe African in origin. And of course there are African tunes to African songs and Indian and South American hymns and tunes and so on!

Some may be wondering how ever they will do this in their particular situation. But little by little we can introduce a variety of styles to help people to see that God does not just speak through 4/4 metre tunes and neither does God speak to us only in hymns with an English origin. God speaks also in the church overseas and is bigger than our limited imagination.

#### Major and minor keys

However unmusical we may be, we have to look (perhaps with someone’s help) at the key signatures of the music we choose. If we have hymns that are all in the major key – bright and cheery – we are giving only one side of the story. On the other hand, if we have hymns that are all in minor keys – slower more reflective, more temperate – that gives another picture. Bright tunes with lots of sharps create a certain kind of mood. Tunes full of flats create a different kind of mood. We may need someone to help us to test the variety of music so we can catch the mood of the piece to avoid sameness in every hymn we choose.

#### Accompaniments

We must think too about accompaniments. There is no need to use only an organ. (After all, long before organs came in, churches were using various instruments.) It’s worth trying singing some hymns without the organ if no other instrumentalists are available. It can be amazing how people rise to the occasion and enjoy singing when they are not being drowned out. If a pianist is available or if the organist is willing occasionally to play a piano, then use it to create variety. Sometimes newer songs are more appropriately played on the piano than some of the older hymns.

Often in a congregation there are children who are learning instruments at school. Find a way of using them even if it is to play a little bit of music at the beginning or the end of the service or during the offering, particularly if they are not yet ready to accompany hymns. Try to make them feel part of the church’s music. The more variety we have in accompaniment, the richer the experience for people in the congregation.

#### Ways of singing

As far as leading the singing goes (and this touches on what I have already said about accompanied or unaccompanied singing), as we look at each song we should also consider how

## *May our praise of God unite us not divide us*

it might best be sung. Is it necessarily appropriate that everybody sings *all* the verses *all* the time? It can be that when we give one verse to women and one to men, those who are not singing a particular verse actually pay more attention to the words than when they are singing. As a result some find they get more out of the hymns if occasionally they don't sing. There are songs with good content that may be sung in rounds. Songs following the children's address lend themselves to this. Half the congregation start off and half come in later. Alternatively, half can sing a verse and the other half echo it; a number of newer songs lend themselves to this.

Look at all these things and consider carefully the hymns chosen, the tune to which they will be sung, the pace and mood of each tune. Think about how they will be sung. Sing them over to yourself and try to imagine how they all go together. Ask yourself whether there is unity within diversity. Is there variety in at least some of the ways I have outlined? Work for variety in different ways in order that the singing will be kept fresh but also to enrich the whole worship of God's people.

### **Participation in Worship**

The third principle is participation because in the Psalms more than anywhere else in the Bible we see all creation is called upon to praise the Lord. Stars sing in chorus, east and west sing, hills shout with joy, mountains skip, valleys laugh, trees clap their hands, the deep lifts up its voice, clear waters resound, fields exalt, fire inhales; snow and ice, fruit trees and cedars, creeping creatures, winged creatures not forgetting sea monsters – all are summoned to praise the Lord. There are also the people who are summoned: kings, princes, rulers, men and virgins, old and young, children and babies.

Think about this huge variety within the orbit of God's people together with all of creation being called on to praise God. Everyone has something to offer and it is

important that in our choice of hymns we let people bring what they are able. If they can play an instrument let them play. If some can sing well let them sing. If babies babble let them babble because when Jesus heard the sound of children in the temple he heard and commented!

### **Apprentice angels**

There is a man with a learning disability in my own church who sits in the front pew facing the choir and when he stands to sing he opens his mouth and just lets the sound come out; then when the hymn comes to an end he quietly sits down. Surely there is a place for people to offer to God what they are able, however limited that may be. We don't have to be good singers to be able to sing the hymn tunes properly. In a way all believers are apprentice angels and one day we will be singing in heaven.

In choosing hymns, therefore, make sure that they are singable. Try singing them (perhaps in the bath!) to be sure the people can get the tune. Moreover, every minister should lead in the singing by example! We don't have to be brilliant singers. Indeed, it may help our people if they know we are not good singers but we are nevertheless obviously leading them in worship with all our souls, singing out in praise to God. Then they will not be caught in the trap of thinking they could never sing well enough, which is what can happen if a talented singer leads up front. Ministers must really encourage their people by example – how well we can sing is quite unimportant.

### **Relevance**

This third principle of participation has implications for the *language* in hymns as well. The hymns must make sense and the language must be relevant to people. It may well be that in some situations the relevance and language may consist in the words, "*Thine* be the glory.." instead of a new version "*Yours* be the glory.." because those in the congregation prefer to address God using the archaic "*thine*". We must not assume we are being relevant simply by using newer versions of old hymns. Rather, we must ask ourselves about the relevance of the words in our situation. We must assess what is most appropriate so that

all our people will be included in whatever hymns we are using.

(Not being a trained theologian, I will not comment on the theological content of hymns except to say the minister I worked with saw good biblical content as the very first priority in every hymn he chose.)

### **Something for all God's people**

Finally, look through the hymns chosen and ask whether there is something for everyone? Have we included a style that will meet the needs of the majority of our people? Or are we forcing them to accept a style of praise that happens to be our own personal preference? It is all too possible for ministers to be subtly selfish in their choice of hymns. Some may well find that they need somebody to help them in this important aspect of preparation for the services. Perhaps the organist may help, or a member of the family, or someone else (though be careful not to allow one person to take over and monopolise the vital choice of hymns).

I do trust and pray that what I have written will be of help to some who may be finding problems in this whole area in a day and age when singing and music in churches is often provoking much unease and controversy. May all our praise and adoration of God unite us, not divide us. Above all, if change is needed, then be willing to work slowly for that change in order to hold the congregation together. Who can deny that a *united* congregation will be much more open to God's blessing and the ministry of his word!

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<sup>1</sup> *Glory to God*, OUP, 1994.

<sup>2</sup> We must not confuse *doubts* with *unbelief*. In the Psalms (e.g. 73) we see faith under attack, and faith under attack expresses itself as *doubt*. Ed.

<sup>3</sup> E.g. Psalm 136

<sup>4</sup> See Psalms 149, 150.

# The Minister and the Fellowship

Dr Montagu Barker

This is the third in a series of articles on Stress in the Ministry

In theological colleges and manuals of pastoralia, much is taught about the ministers' devotional and prayer lives and their relationship with God. One book by Owen Branden of St Augustine's College at Canterbury, *The Pastor and his Ministry*, speaks of the minister as a servant, teacher, guide, theologian, priest, pastor and professional; he writes nothing about the pastor as a member of the fellowship, a member of the body. Nor does he write about the pastoral needs of ministers themselves, or who should pastor the pastors.

## Help for the helpers

In the secular world, there is a great deal of talk about help for the helpers. Especially in psychiatry, there is an awareness that those who are giving out emotionally and are involved with people in support and counselling, are themselves in need of support and care. The secular world, therefore, has set up support structures with management courses, special training courses, group leaders' courses, encounter groups, psychotherapy supervision, or personal therapy. The medical world has its clinical teams, with shared responsibility for the patients.

As so often happens, the church has followed by setting up parallel supports on a secular pattern. I do not want to diminish support groups, for the secular world has accurately spotted an area of human need. There is at least some provision being made for ministers, but support groups are limited in the help they can offer.

How then does the minister receive support? I will outline two patterns of ministry, which I admit I have caricatured. My aim is to use these rather idealised "cardboard cut-outs" to focus on the underlying attitudes of ministers, and the personal care and support they give and receive in these very different patterns of ministry.

## Those who are leaders of the fellowship

This type of minister can lord it over God's people – and may be leading any sort of church or society. Those who fulfil this kind of role would have done well in business as executives.

Their churches are highly efficient, with a splendid hierarchy of committees, and an endless flow of information. Such ministers professionalise their work, and become detached from the fellowship. They become preoccupied with techniques of counselling, house visiting, church growth or evangelism. The result can be most impressive, with well run churches ticking over very well. This is very much the pattern of the successful, middle-class parish in a university town. There is superb music, excellent preaching, and high calibre assistants or curates. The ministers see real numerical growth, and are very fulfilled by a sense of God working through them.

However, the church cannot but be dependent on the individual pastor, and the glory begins to depart once the minister moves on. We have many vast ecclesiastical shells that are memorials to particular ministers, or to a succession of good ministerial 'managing directors'.

In themselves, these situations are not wrong. Indeed, they have a special role within a city or diocese, for setting standards, training, and reaching out. Paul held up the giving of the Macedonians to the Corinthian church as an example (2 Cor. 8:1ff). These large and efficient churches are a real source of stimulus and encouragement to more struggling fellowships. But they also can have real problems.

## Clerically dependent fellowships

The great snare is that where these fellowships become clerically dependent, they never grow in depth and maturity. The members are not able to exercise fully their own gifts as the ministers themselves are so gifted. The congregations become passive recipients rather than active participants, and so cannot mature. At worst, this pattern of ministry can give rise to clerical prima donnas, who lord it over God's heritage – and the congregation becomes an flowing tide of commuters and passengers.

This is still seen today in certain evangelical circles. Some ministers are always fussing over their members, counselling them, combing their hair and straightening their ties, so to speak. They cannot take their hands off, and allow them to get dirty



and experience a little bit of pain. They are people who have a great need to care, and that can be a dangerous complaint. Their products are dependent on them, little marching saints who will do exactly as expected, going out into the world with their tight programmes and manuals of techniques. This may be helpful for some in the early days of their Christian life, but does not produce maturity. Such fussing and over-disciplining never allows people to grow and take responsibility.

#### **The effects on the minister**

If these are some of the possible effects on the fellowship of such a ministry, what are the effects on the minister's personal life? The spouses of such ministers are frequently depressed, unless they acquire careers of their own and lead semi-independent lives. They thought they had married a minister, not a tycoon. Now they find themselves with all the problems of a tycoon's partner, but without the money or the parties! In the previous parish, the wife had been very fulfilled, running the Sunday School, leading the woman's organisation, opening the fête – but now there are very powerful people around well able to do those tasks. The ministers themselves may run into

#### **Clerical professionalism**

Some forms of the modern team ministries can be like this, in that they emphasise this clerical professionalism. They can become very analogous to the medical group practices at Health Centres: a different doctor on call each night and a deputy at weekends. But when your gut is sore at midnight, you want your own doctor. The group practice may be an efficient and logical system, but it has major defects. There is no sense of belonging, no opportunity for caring or deeper healing; and there is no involvement or consistent feedback to the doctor in the medical field or to the clergyman within the parish. Something is lost which is of the essence of pastoring the flock and being part of the fellowship.

#### **The servant of the fellowship**

Here is a much more person-oriented minister. Those who are 'servants' are much less concerned with organisation and preaching, and far more involved in visiting, counselling and caring. They allow greater flexibility, are more available as persons, and are loved by their people. Often they will have a profound influence on the fellowship, though they can be

## *They are people who have a great need to care*

grave difficulties when their drive goes, their enthusiasm wanes, their health deteriorates or personal problems arise: they have never been close enough to anyone to ask for help. They get the Elijah complex. If they are fortunate, the ministry department or bishop finds a little field somewhere to put the poor soul out to pasture.

#### **Not a Biblical pattern**

I want to suggest this is not a Biblical pattern of ministry. These ministers' support (such as it is) largely comes from fellow clergy, who are of course separate from the fellowship. They rely on the professionalism of the ministry, with its skills, resources and experience. No personal support comes from the staff meetings, which are run like business board meetings, with the rector or minister as an aloof boss. This is a secular pattern, closely analogous to the medical consultant with his junior staff. The staff meeting becomes like a ward round; I am the boss as the consultant, but want to hear what my staff have to say.

Let us not despise these churches; but the more ministers tend towards such an attitude, the more impoverished all become. The fellowship is deprived of the minister's personal contribution, and the minister is deprived of the fellowship's support. This is also a great source of minister-assistant/vicar-curate tension, because the minister or vicar does not relate to anyone in the fellowship, including the assistant or curate.

the despair of their family and assistant ministers or curates. They have time for everyone and everything; they allow the home to be invaded, meals to go cold and family outings to be cancelled. They neglect their own needs and the needs of their families.

They may also neglect the need to discipline those clamouring for their aid. They may bring problem people into the home, psychiatric patients and people with disturbed personalities, and set up a system of communal living. Often the result is increased distress within the family, depression in the wife, and sometimes disillusionment in the minister himself. A number of prominent clergy have recently spoken openly about depression in their spouses and families, as the home was invaded by all this caring.

This has been written about by the Dilorum family, a group of young people involved with hippies in Kabul, in their book *Just off Chicken Street*:

*"The need for privacy can become a serious problem. I was guilty of being too preoccupied by the needs of the Dilorum family and not mindful enough of my wife's right to unshared private life. We needed more time alone, more time to share; just the two of us"*

Now to some extent, all ministers experience that tension. But as with the first example, the minister who serves in this way produces a clerically-dependent fellowship, with people who never grow and mature. They are used to everything

being done for them and have an expectation of instant availability, with inordinate time being spent on their problems. They have never been allowed to feel the pain of taking responsibility, of seeing confrontation, or of limits being set on what is offered. Thus they cannot learn more mature ways of behaving. Children need love, the setting of limits, and the imposing of discipline in order to grow up and mature; the same is true of members of the fellowship.

### **An attempted solution**

Arising out of these tensions in seeking to be a servant, many ministers seek some expertise to discern the central problem more easily. The special skill acquired helps the minister to handle the situation better, while also protecting himself. In the United States, this is seen to an extreme degree, where the theological student has to undergo personal psychotherapy, and many ministers get into pastoral counselling.

The dangers of such training in 'pastoral counselling' have been well outlined by a Jesuit, Père André Godin:

*"Books devoted to the study of personality, or an elementary psychiatry for the clergy, can accustom him to substituting a system of labels and classification for the complex task of the true mental*

part of the clinical team: he has no access to the clinical records or the ward rounds and there may even be hostility from the medics. Some years ago I spoke to a group of hospital chaplains. They exploded with frustration that they could at last let loose, with a real doctor in front of them. There was nothing personal about their outburst; they were realising their pent-up frustration which came out of their unfulfilled aspirations.

A recent book by Frank Wright on the pastoral ministry puts this well:

Even in hospitals and prisons, where chaplains have a well-defined pastoral role, pastors sometimes feel like optional extras: tolerated, but not always – and in no way significant. There is a loneliness arising from his profession as pastor, in addition to the inescapable loneliness of the human condition.

Furthermore, what is the personal support of ministers in these specialised areas? So often it is other clergy, supplemented by the need and gratitude of those seeking aid. The minister becomes greedy for situations of need, and hangs on to them because they are sustaining him in a particular way. Part of the result is dependency.

Ministers who adopt either of these approaches, *leading*

# *The need for privacy can become a serious problem*

*discernment and moral support. At first, this facility seems tempting, but in the end it spoils contact with the real person by removing him and placing him behind the bars of a conceptual scheme. A genuine pastoral psychology must be especially severe with these pseudo-psychological works, from which the reader is supposed to learn the art of making converts, winning vocations, suppressing masturbation, and commanding an audience. Appealing to the urge for power and promising to yield the secret of influencing people, without having to learn how to be open to others, such books are nothing but a caricature of psychological work in general and of pastoral work in particular. Nevertheless, this caricature must still be feared, if only because of the willingness of certain readers to accept it."*

Much the same can be said of this country, where many ministers set great store by their specialist ministries; the snare is that there is an associated professionalism – the professionalism of the counsellor, the healer, the therapist, or the church growth expert. They may acquire considerable expertise, at some cost; but in addition to distancing themselves from their fellowship, they also very rarely acquire recognition from the professionals among whom they work. The minister sees himself as a professional, but is rarely accepted by other professionals resulting in immense frustration.

### **Frustration and isolation**

This frustration and isolation of the specialist minister is often seen in the hospital chaplain. He is part of the staff, but not

and serving, may well be left isolated. They are outside the fellowship of which they are members. The result may be that those who are pastors have no pastor themselves.

So from where should ministers and their families receive support and sustaining? Surely it is from the body of Christ of which they are parts; from the fellowship to which they are ministering. In my next article, we shall look in some depth at a Biblical model in which ministers are members of the fellowship.

# 'Alpha' Courses

*At its recent annual gathering (September 1996) the Rutherford House Church and Ministry Study Group gave part of its time to a seminar on 'Alpha' Groups. During the very full discussion, consideration was given to the introductory video to 'Alpha' courses, to the course manual and to a recent review article published in the Evangelical Times (August 1996). In the observations below the convener of the Church & Ministry Study Group outlines some of his personal views regarding Alpha courses as presented by these sources.*

## The Video

'Alpha', the fast growing practical introduction to the Christian Faith

The video is a superbly professional piece of Christian publicity and promotion. It lasts for about 14 minutes and, while short enough not to lose impact, it is long enough to give adequate insight into what Alpha courses are all about. It helps those who have no church connection to come over the threshold, as it were, and, by means of such a course, to come to faith.

Folk are seen moving from the crowded street into Holy Trinity, Brompton, where they are turned into people with bright and happy faces whose lives have been changed through following one or other of the many 'Alpha' courses held there.

The Rev. Sandy Miller expands on

the nature of the course and why it is so effective. It leads folk to faith in Christ as Saviour, to have spirit-filled lives and, as appropriate, to find God's healing power. People of different ages and from different walks of life are interviewed and testify to the changes which have come over them. The Rev Nicky Gumbell, a former barrister and an increasingly well-known writer, explains how the course may be adapted to other situations than that of Holy Trinity, Brompton. A series of videos is recommended to accompany the course manual, especially for small groups.

The undoubtedly triumphalist tone of the video (not always corroborated by some of the churches which have participated) is further enhanced at the close of the tape by a rapidly moving list of churches in almost every county in England and beyond. The list is not quite so impressive when the tape is slowed down. Admittedly, it claims that the list is of some of the churches registered, but only one in Greater Manchester is mentioned and only ten in Scotland! However, one hears that the numbers continue to grow.

Yet further enquiries reveal, however, that many participant churches are increasingly doing their own thing with regard to certain sections within the manual. This applies particularly to the sections dealing with the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit, and also the prescribed weekend (or day) away which likewise focuses on the Holy Spirit. Such diversions from the (explicitly) charismatic teaching of the course are not, apparently, favoured by Holy

Trinity, Brompton, although they are quite widespread.

## The Manual

The manual for 'Alpha' courses is an attractive presentation with an inviting glossy paperback. Every page leaves plenty of room for one's own notes. The manual contains 14 studies covering the principal aspects of Christian belief, spelt out in very simple note form, often using no more than a key word. These are fleshed out with plentiful references to Scripture (over 250 in all) and a few pertinent quotations from C S Lewis and others. It has something of an Anglican flavour, resembling a three-month confirmation course. It is helpful both in enabling folk to grasp what Christianity is about if not yet believers, and as a rudimentary introduction to systematic theology, which can be no bad thing in this day of predominantly experiential Christianity.

A serious criticism of the manual which was made by most of the Church & Ministry Study Group is that it moves far too rapidly from 'nowhere' to Christian belief and living the Christian life, in only three studies (which are intended to be taken over three weeks) to be precise. Experienced pastors know only too well that so many of the flock come to saving faith only after years of teaching, thought and consideration, and those pastors who have used 'Alpha' courses testify only too clearly that the courses are not all quite such plain sailing as the video suggests.

Yet another serious criticism offered by some, and already hinted at, is the

# Some Observations and Misgivings

motif of two-tier Christianity. I mean the belief that there are 'ordinary' Christians and those who are Spirit-filled and speak in tongues (p 36). For many, including the present writer, questions must be raised regarding speaking in tongues. Is it a miraculous gift of the Spirit? Or is it the sincere praising of God, through unintelligible sounds or some merely psychological factor, simulating a phenomenon present in the New Testament, the nature of which is not at all clear and the explanation of which is highly controversial?

It simply won't do to suggest that those who do not speak in tongues must have barriers to faith. So many spiritual giants, who make even the most powerful charismatic figures appear as pygmies, apparently never claimed to speak in tongues. One thinks of Calvin, Owen, Spurgeon and Lloyd-Jones, among many others.

The section 'Does God heal today?' (pp 58-62) bombards the reader with a number of texts containing God's promises to heal. To those of us who would be more cautious about the readiness of God to bring about physical healing in this life, it conveys an impression of 'never mind the exegesis of the texts, feel the force.'

## The week-end away

The climax of the course is the day, or, better still, weekend away. Here there is intended to be heavy emphasis on the Holy Spirit and the importance of speaking in tongues. The key book for

this time is Jackie Pullinger's *Chasing the Dragon* of which the predominant theme is the value of speaking in tongues. Some of the histrionics familiar in charismatic circles, and reported to be of use in some 'Alpha' courses, include standing in silence waiting for the Holy Spirit to descend. This is unbiblical (it is hardly what occurred in the Upper Room) and can also be merely a psychological device to 'bring about' what is anticipated. Some who have experienced this kind of phenomenon have been disturbed by it, while others have been very sceptical of the ready claim for it to be a manifestation of the Holy Spirit.

## Evangelical Times Review Article

The review article which appeared in a recent edition of the 'Evangelical Times' came from the pen of the Rev. Geoffrey Thomas, a well-known Reformed minister in Aberystwyth, and is entitled 'The Alpha Manual'. In the view of the present writer, Mr Thomas' criticism is too strong. Nevertheless, he does highlight some very important defects in the charismatic teaching transmitted by the manual.

First, he feels that the understanding of God presented by it is far too subjective. God is predominantly presented, Thomas argues, as an 'internal presence' — a God of love, comfort, order and security only, and never as a God of justice, judgement, wrath and punishment. In fairness to the manual, the God who sent His only Son to die that we might live is first and foremost a

God of mercy and of grace, slow to anger, quick to have mercy and of great kindness, who 'desires not the death of a sinner but rather that he may turn from his wickedness and live.' The manual emphasises this.

In my view, it is too harsh of Geoffrey Thomas to argue that the 'Alpha' course presents God as merely there for our gratification. However, his warning that charismatic theology is 'too psychologically oriented rather than grounded in God ... to glorify him forever' should most certainly be heeded.

Perhaps the most serious worry, which Thomas is right to highlight, is that commitment to belief in the teaching is too readily taken for faith. At the end of the course, participants are asked 'Now do you believe the teaching?' Those who answer 'I do' are pronounced its devotees and committed Christians. If such an assent makes one an 'ordinary Christian', there is certainly a need for a further 'baptism of the Holy Spirit', a need to be 'born again' which I suspect is what has happened to many charismatics, tongues being peripheral, imposed by the charismatic sub-culture.

But enough! The present writer concurs with Geoffrey Thomas that the manual contains enough Biblical truth and counsel for people to find Christ as the Saviour, and this must not be neglected. Is it too much to hope that the course be revised and improved and that we shall shortly see widespread 'Beta' courses?

Rev. Canon Peter Cook  
Cheadle Hulme

# TEENAGERS and FAITH

*It is availability which is the key*

My daughter is coming home today. The bed is made up. Her room is ready. I spent the morning vacuuming and dusting. How easy it was compared to a few years ago! Then every possible surface was covered in teenage paraphernalia – books, records, cassettes and discarded articles of clothing. Today there were no hindrances to hold up the progress of the hoover and duster.

She'll be home at 8 o'clock. I feel excitement and anticipation, but that is tempered by the sober reality that in a few days she will return again to her own life, with confidence and without a backward glance. And as a mother, I want it no other way. I try not to look into the two boys' rooms – tidy and very, very empty.

## No fussing or nagging

Yes, all the children have grown up. I know now that I squandered much of the precious time which I was given with them. I soon realised that fussing and 'nagging' were out. They didn't want a mother constantly checking up on them. Like all teenagers, they wanted space to grow up. Despite that, they still needed attention.

Today it is a cliché that communication with teenagers is vital. But for communication to happen at all, parents must be available. It is *availability* which is the key.

When our three children were young, Sunday afternoon was the time for Christian teaching. And they responded instantly to 'Let's have a Bible story!' The cries were always for more. After adolescence, it was not so easy. Lengthy formal instruction made our teenagers embarrassed. We soon realised that we needed a new approach. I simply had to 'be around' – day by day availability.

## Teenage years

In some families, the arrival of the teenage years is seen as an opportunity for parents to leave the nest and follow their own devices. Although I did have a job outside the home, we decided that I should try, as far as possible, to keep the evenings for the family. Whenever I was at home, available to read essays or maybe check maths problems, invariably the opportunity arose to talk about other matters. English homework, for example, often led to a discussion of the Bible's

teaching. The 'set-book' for examinations were sometimes atheistic in outlook, and in trying to help in making a critical assessment, I could naturally introduce the Christian alternative.

On one occasion, I remember my daughter had to write an essay on one of D. H. Lawrence's short stories. We read the story and chatted about it. Despite having given the story as suitable for a girl of her age, her teacher was taken aback when she handed in a thorough discussion of the motives and morals involved. Later, her English teacher said to me 'She's very mature indeed'. He was wrong. She had simply found the advantage of Christian certainty in the midst of the sea of uncertainties into which most of her class-mates had been thrown.

*Although I did  
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keep the evenings  
for the family*

## The unexpected crisis

Anyone who has a teenager in the home will know that sudden crises and dramas are the norm. For no apparent reason dark clouds blow across their lives and disaster has struck. These crises, inexplicable to the bewildered parent, can actually be opportunities to teach our son or daughter to trust in the Lord. Christian teaching at this stage has to be very practical. One evening as I was rushing out to a women's meeting,

I found my teenage son in floods of tears. Tears – from a boy who could bear a rugby tackle without flinching. My wise husband said, ‘The ladies can do without you tonight.’ Someone else led the meeting and I gave my son my full attention.

It came out that on top of the anxiety of study for crucial exams due to begin the next week, his Boys’ Brigade captain had unwittingly made the pressure unbearable. He had asked our usually obliging son to produce a sketch for the B.B. open night at the end of the week. At first he was angry with the world in general and refused to be helped. Eventually I offered to help him with the sketch. I thought of an idea and pointed out it would need little rehearsal. Then we committed the problem to the Lord. All went well. The sketch was the hit of the evening. He sat his exams successfully. I was rewarded, after the stress was over, with a heart-felt, ‘Thanks very much Mum.’

We had both learned afresh that God cares and that God answers. But what would have happened if I had gone to my meeting? At the heart of it all was availability.

### **Children are a heritage**

The Bible says in Psalm 127:3 ‘Sons are a heritage from the Lord. Children a reward from Him.’ A heritage is something

precious. In every country there is nothing sadder than the neglect of an estate by an absentee foreign landlord – never available to hear tenants’ problems or to see that repairs are carried out. And of course, the carelessness soon shows in rundown, neglected farms and angry workers.

A neglected heritage is a sorry sight. The Lord has given into our hands the spiritual heritage of our children through all their growing years. That includes our teenage children. Our responsibilities to our Church are important; our responsibilities to provide financially for our family are important. But the spiritual responsibility to our children is paramount. We can love them and pray for them. Yet, if we are not available when we are needed, the love and prayers may go unheeded. The psalm also says that children are ‘a reward’. One of the most wonderful aspects of that reward is to see our children grasping our faith as their own. For that to happen we should try to be available whenever our teenagers need us.

*Christine Wilson, minister’s wife.*

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# L-O-V-E

*Christ-like love is a love which gives and never counts the cost.*

In 1951, twenty-four leaders of the China Inland Mission (the OMF) met together in Manila at a moment of great crisis.

The Communist take-over in China had meant the expulsion of all Christian missionaries. Most of their missionaries had come out unharmed, but what was to be the next move? One of those present said, "It was a baffling experience. There was no awareness of the presence of God. There was no sense of divine direction, we felt completely at a loss as to what to do"

One day there came to the conference by invitation the surviving daughter of General Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army. As she sat around the table and listened to their conversation, she suddenly interrupted and asked, "Gentlemen, how do you spell love?" There was an embarrassing silence. Then someone stated the obvious, "Why, L-O-V-E, of course." General Booth's daughter gently

shook her head, "No, gentlemen. Will you allow me to spell 'love' for you? It is spelt S-A-C-R-I-F-I-C-E."

Into that strategic conference came the melting and moving power of the Spirit of God and, in the years that followed, the OMF has undertaken one of the greatest efforts of missionary endeavour in South East Asia, for they spelt love s-a-c-r-i-f-i-c-e. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not sacrifice, I am nothing."

Christ-like love is a love which gives and never counts the cost. It is a love which lifts the fallen and comforts the sorrowing. It is a love which challenges corrupt moral standards, faces broken homes and leads them back to the New Testament joy of living. Without such love, we are nothing and the church will go nowhere. Who can doubt but that love is the Church's greatest need.

David J. Temple

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# Ann Allen meets

*When Jim McCaughan, a newly converted Christian, left his manse home in Ulster to study in Dundee he imagined his career in civil engineering was mapped out before him. However the Lord had another plan and after graduating Jim went on to Union Seminary to study divinity like his grandfather, father before him and alongside his wife Alison. Ann Allen caught up with him in the picturesque village of Articlave in the town land of Dunboe on Ulster's tourist trail and found out what has been happening during his fourteen years of ministry there.*



ANN: Jim, this is your first and only charge. Did you have a clear vision of the kind of ministry you would want to exercise when you arrived here in First Dunboe Presbyterian Church?

JIM: Yes. I believe the Church is concerned with two entities, the Lord and the people. So I had two priorities. First, to teach the Bible consecutively and consistently so that the people would be built up through practical, applied teaching. Second, to have an inclusive ministry which would draw people in to the church from the outside through using their practical gifts or through their involvement in church organisations.

ANN: How would you describe your congregation here?

JIM: We have three hundred and ten families worshipping with us. Most are from Dunboe but others travel from the surrounding area. This kind of gathering of people would be a feature of most Ulster Presbyterian congregations. Our church is a great mix, socially, economically and in age. It really is a complete cross-section of society. That has meant that we haven't been stuck in a rut and has opened the door for creativity and new ideas.

ANN: Your description of a congregation open to change would be music to most ministerial ears! How do you think that has come about?

JIM: It hasn't come about through changing ministries because since 1656 there have only been 13 ministers in this charge! The average length of ministry over three hundred and forty years has been twenty-six years.

ANN: Most people would assume that would militate against change.

JIM: On the contrary it has produced a secure and happy congregation willing to consider change if it is necessary and for the benefit of the majority.

ANN: How would you describe your leading of the congregation through the past 14 years?

JIM: I'm convinced that a person who leads without taking people along is just someone out for a walk – not a leader at all. So the pattern has been to discuss until people are persuaded as to the right way ahead. We have never progressed any plans until the majority are firmly behind us. Dissenting voices have been heard and problems talked through and then our office-bearers have gone ahead unitedly.

ANN: There have been changes on two fronts: in your buildings and in the spiritual work. Tell us first about your building programme.

JIM: The Manse had to be the first major project. In 1982 it was in dire need of

either renovation or demolition so £35,000 had to be spent (in real terms in 1996 that would probably amount to £100,000). Then in 1988 we opened our extended and renovated hall and bought adjacent land for car parking. We spent over £150,000 on the Halls. But all the work that could be was done voluntarily by ourselves. The folks gave their time and gifts for plumbing, rewiring, decorating, carpentry – you name it, they did it. The result was the project was owned by them and generated an enormous amount of enthusiasm and good will.

Some who rarely came to church but whose children attended Sunday School, set aside time to work hard on the renovations. The result has been that they are now involved in every aspect of the congregation's life.

ANN: You have also practically rebuilt the church itself haven't you?

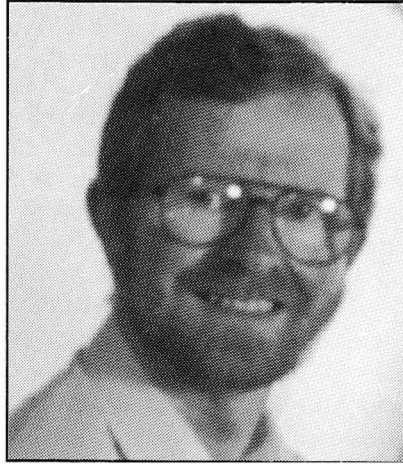
JIM: Our present sanctuary was constructed in 1936 and from the start had major defects. So we decided to take the plunge and sort it all out. That involved peeling off the roof, the outer walls, renewing the windows and the outer skin to make the building weatherproof. During this work we worshipped in the hall. Now we are into phase two which includes rewiring, fitting a new public address system, complete new lighting, central heating and redecoration.

ANN: I almost hesitate to ask, but how much has all this cost and how have you raised it?

JIM: To date a total of £261,347 has been raised for the church building and it has all been given or raised by our members without any outside grants.



# Jim McCaughan



ANN: That is a remarkable achievement and of course it's still ongoing as you complete this second phase. Haven't you found all this activity a distraction from the real work of ministry?

JIM: No, I don't think that has happened. The congregation have pulled together so well and have been committed to getting the work done. The result has been that real fellowship and a proper sense of pride in the work has been fostered. Alongside that the Lord has been leading us into spiritual development and new areas of work.

ANN: Has this been in the form of dramatic change and upheaval or a slow steady growth?

JIM: Under God, we have both built on what was here and diversified. There has always been a wonderful Sunday School here. The tradition still in Ulster is for children to attend Sunday School. We also have a very committed group of Sunday School teachers. Recently some parents came and asked if they could start a club for primary age children and now "PAWS" – Praise And Worship Squad – meet on Fridays. We inherited an embryonic youth Group for 12-17 year olds. It started in the vacancy and has been a tremendous source of encouragement. It is not that it has ever achieved large numbers but from it have emerged outstanding young people who are now serving the Lord.

It has always been a discipleship group and its meetings had open prayer built in to their structure. Today there are four former members in full time preaching ministry and one on the mission field as well as others who lead in our own and other congregations. Then we have over a hundred girls in

the Girls Brigade with dedicated and committed leadership.

We have encouraged young people to go overseas in summer vacations on missionary schemes. Two have gone to Nepal, one to Belgium, two to Brazil, one to Nicaragua, two to the Czech Republic and one to Burma. You can understand that personal contact has over the years engendered a lot of interest and focused prayer on the mission field. At the time we were repairing our Church roof we sent funds to Nepal to repair a church there. Our missionary strategy is now to concentrate on four missionary partners in Romania, the south of France, Jamaica and Brazil.

ANN: That describes a fruitful and diverse youth and missionary strategy. What about adult fellowship and ministry?

JIM: As well as our weekly prayer meeting, we have now run three times a twelve week "Personal Growth Course" and this has been really profitable with some openly professing faith publicly for the first time. We also have a healing service from time to time.

ANN: How is your healing service structured?

JIM: Our presbytery has a policy of encouraging healing services and in our own case we began because a parishioner came requesting prayer and

anointing for his wife who had been given a poor prognosis and was suffering from cancer. Implementing James 5, two elders went with me and prayed with this believing lady with resulting blessing to the whole family.

Our healing service is very low key, offers ministry and always gives an opportunity for people to give thanks for healing. It is rare for there to be no thanksgiving which is marvellous.

ANN: Are there other innovations which have encouraged you?

JIM: One of the most exciting things is our summer outreach at Benone, a holiday caravan and camping site. Although it is outside our parish we were so concerned that there be an outreach to the many tourists there that we approached Magilligan Presbyterian Church, a neighbouring congregation, which has only fifty families and together we organise epilogue services for each Sunday throughout the summer season.

We now have a Summer Assistant who visits round the caravans and runs a morning children's meeting. This has been a enormous incentive to both congregations. Folk get involved and look forward to it and now there are summer mission teams there for three weeks in the summer months and many of our young folk participate.

ANN: Dunboe? A little rural community which the tourists pass through and hardly notice but where in spiritual terms SOMETHING is happening. A country congregation is galvanised into rebuilding its manse, halls and church, into missionary support and outreach to folk within and outwith its boundaries. This is surely an example of what God can do through a ministry and a people when they are obedient to the Word taught and when they are welcomed into the body life of a loving, living fellowship.

# CHARISMATIC MINISTRY

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## *Professor Donald MacLeod*

One of the saddest features of Christian history has been the way that the great epithets applied to the church have been debased to the point where they have become terms of opprobrium. To many people the word orthodox suggests at once something dead, formal and sterile. To many others, the word catholic serves only to ignite the fires of bigotry. More recently, the word charismatic has suffered a similar fate. Because one group of believers has claimed it as exclusively their own, others have renounced it altogether and even come to equate 'going charismatic' with 'going to the Devil'.

But this debasing of our ecclesiastical currency is surely misguided. Every authentic church must be orthodox, catholic and charismatic. Orthodoxy is no more than profession of the truth. Catholicity means that we belong to the one church; Christ has only one. And to be charismatic means simply that we depend for our survival on the graces of the Holy Spirit. In the present climate, this last is peculiarly important. It would be utterly tragic to react to Pentecostal excesses by losing sight of the fact that the church is charismatic in its very nature. It cannot exist without being charismatic.

### **The variety of charismata**

The word must be used, of course, in its biblical sense. It does not mean the possession of a magnetic charm or a dominating personality or outstanding natural gifts. Nor does it mean speaking in tongues, engaging

in disco-type worship and emphasising spontaneity at the expense of order. To say that the church is charismatic is to say that it possesses spiritual gifts and that it depends on these gifts for its effectiveness.

How can a church possibly renounce all claims to such a status? It is made up of spiritual people. It constitutes a spiritual temple. Its members do not comprise the wise, the mighty and the noble but the unlearned, the weak and the ordinary. They can serve one another – and the wider community – only in the power of the Spirit, conferring on them a great variety of spiritual gifts. Some of these – the revelatory gifts – have ceased. But the vast majority of them remain: wisdom, knowledge, teaching, counselling, government, leadership, serving, comforting, exhorting, liberality, administration. These are as vital to the church today as to the believers of the first century.

The charismatic nature of the church is most immediately obvious in connection with its office-bearers. Every ecclesiastical functionary is first and foremost a spiritually gifted man. This is perfectly clear even with regard to the Old Testament church. The prophets, the kings, the judges, the priests – all were charismatic figures. The position in the New Testament is the same. Apostleship was a grace, a *charis* (Rom. 1: 5). The other offices are similarly conceived. They were not related to natural ability or to professional training but to the endowments of the Spirit. The teacher had to be 'apt to teach'. The pastor had to have the gift of government. Even those who served tables had to be full of the Spirit.

### **Sacerdotalism**

Sadly the church did not long retain this vision and alternative views of the

Christian ministry soon prevailed. The most widespread of these was the sacerdotal, which saw the minister primarily as a priest with quasi magical powers. The responsibilities of such a man centred on the sacraments. In the Communion service he transformed the bread and wine into the whole body, soul and divinity of the Son of God, offered them to God as a propitiatory sacrifice and distributed them to the faithful as their spiritual nourishment. In the service of baptism he administered a rite which automatically and invariably regenerated the recipient. Such a man was not a charismatic. He was a Christian witch-doctor.

### **Professionalism**

Presbyterianism, for the most part, escaped this particular distortion. Instead it faced the danger of an unbiblical professionalism. The view tended to prevail that any respectable man of ordinary intelligence could be turned into a minister by proper university training. Furthermore, a man could survive in the ministry by paying proper attention to the ordinary elements of professionalism: careful attention to consumer expectations, diligence in his homework and punctuality in his appointments.

The traditional models of such professionalism were the teacher and the doctor. More recently, especially in America, ministers have seen themselves as managerial executives. The vestry has become a boardroom and the church has been run according to the best business methods. The trappings may be different, but the principle is the same as often prevailed in Scotland – the 'lad o' pairts' graduating via a schoolmastership to the pastorate of a respectable congregation.

## Betrayal

Both of these concepts – the sacerdotal and the professional – involved a betrayal of the New Testament vision. In the apostolic church, the ministry was not remotely sacerdotal. Indeed, the paucity of references to the sacraments is quite astonishing and their relative unimportance is given formal expression in 1 Cor. 1:17, 'Christ sent me not to baptise, but to preach the gospel'. Nor was the apostolic ministry remotely professional. Apart from Paul, the outstanding figures of the New Testament had little formal education. They were charismatics.

Both of these concepts – the sacerdotal and the professional – involved a betrayal of the New Testament vision. In the apostolic church, the ministry was not remotely sacerdotal. Nor was the apostolic ministry remotely professional. Apart from Paul, the outstanding figures of the New Testament had little formal education. They were charismatics. This implied several different factors.

## Spiritual gifts necessary

First, the prerequisite for office was the possession of spiritual gifts. This is self-evident with regard to the revelatory offices. No amount of education, experience or common sense could turn a man into an apostle or a prophet. The same was true, however, in other areas. It was not formal training that made a teacher. Training was not unimportant (2 Tim. 2: 2). But it was more fundamental that a man be 'apt to teach' (*didaktikos*).

This implied two other gifts: the gift of knowledge and the gift of communication. These were not matters of mere booklearning (although this was not to be despised: Paul had his parchments). They were – and are – a matter of spiritual insight. The charismatic teacher so sees the truth that he loves it. Furthermore, he sees it in its practical bearings and in its pastoral relevance. His gift is not mere knowledge of the truth but skill in applying it to the needs of the people of God so that they are comforted, admonished and inspired.

The communication skills of the Christian preacher are equally charismatic. They are not identical

with those of the professional journalist, politician or advertiser. In fact, in 1 Cor. 2: 4, Paul disowns these. Spiritual communication is marked not by its dazzling professionalism but by caring, honesty and boldness.

The same principle can be extended into other areas of Christian ministry. In the church, leadership is not a matter of natural gifts. It is a matter of spiritual wisdom, vision and courage. Those who possess it may be men of great natural diffidence and timidity. But their weakness is counterbalanced by the fact that they wait on the Lord.

In the same way, New Testament pastors faced with the pressures of counselling could claim little knowledge of psychology and psychiatry. Nor had they any clinical training. But they had charismata. They had the wisdom that came from above. They had the leading of the Spirit. They had a God-given ability to learn the lessons of experience and to apply biblical principles of conduct. To all such men, knowledge of the basic principles of psychiatry might be a very welcome bonus. But no degree of academic competence can ever compensate for the absence of the pastoral gift itself.

## No effectiveness without the Spirit

Second, within the framework of a charismatic concept of ministry the possibility of success and effectiveness lies only in the Holy Spirit. This is one of the most humbling things in the whole range of the church's experience. Neither natural ability nor academic training nor personal diligence can guarantee effectiveness. The Gospel must come in word (1 Thess. 1: 5). But if it comes in word only, it is useless. It must come in the demonstration and power of the Spirit (1 Cor. 2: 4) and be preached with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven (1 Pet. 1: 2).

The message must be from the Spirit. The words must be from the Spirit ('words which the Holy Spirit teaches'). The impact must be from the Spirit

('whose heart the Lord opened'). Without this concurrent action of the Spirit we are helpless, even when preaching to Christians. And, to our chagrin, we can never guarantee, manage or command His concurrence. Even in revival situations, every single instance of blessing is a sovereign gift resulting from the loving discretion of God.

This is why all programmes for church growth – the ecclesiastical equivalent of 'management by objectives' – are virtually blasphemous. Such a practice is tantamount to dictating to God the precise number of miracles of grace we expect Him to perform. So far as real and abiding blessing is concerned, we remain totally dependent on the ebb and flow of divine power.

## Filled with the Spirit

Third, the obligations and the pit-falls of Christian ministry are those relating to a charismatic situation. We need, like Peter at Pentecost, to be filled with the Holy Spirit. We need to stir up (or fan into flame) the gift of God which is in us. We must avoid grieving or quenching the Spirit. We must even live in holy dread of what is always the ultimate possibility – that God will withdraw His Spirit from Saul and His strength from Samson. Sadly, the fact of such a divine withdrawal may often be obscured from the church and from the individual himself. But whether conscious of it or not he will be left with only the empty shell of office. All the glory, all the power and all the usefulness have departed. He is a cumberer of the ground.

*Editor's note: By kind permission, this article is taken from chapter 5, The Spirit of Promise by Donald MacLeod, published by Christian Focus Publications, Geanies House, Ross-shire.*

## Book Reviews

### Prepare For Revival

Rob Warner

London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1995,  
178pp, £5.99

ISBN 0 340 63029 9

This largely anecdotal book tells the story of the author's encounter with the Toronto Blessing, and seeks to give biblical guidance and precedent for the emotional outpourings that he has experienced recently. However, more of the book is devoted to examples of what is happening today in some churches and comparing that specifically with times of revival under Wesley and Whitefield.

Mr Warner's own faith and love for the Lord have clearly deepened through his experiences. Some of the stories recounted tell of people being led to a deeper desire to get into the Word, a deeper love for the Lord, more joy, peace, etc. Many have been led to repentance and others to assurance of forgiveness. A number of warnings are given against the excesses of this movement including an over-emphasis on the 'manifestations', pride, and the dangers of a gnostic type of filluminism. However, he believes that what he has seen and experienced is a work of God and may yet be proved to be the start of revival.

Some descriptions of how people have come to a deeper understanding and love of the Lord are moving but I am not convinced of the relevance of much of the biblical evidence and not entirely persuaded that there are such direct parallels between what he describes and what we read of in Jonathan Edwards and others. It was during the preaching of the Word that most of what Edwards describes took place. The current experiences seem to happen for the most part when people are specifically and often individually prayed for. I am concerned at some of the more way-out manifestations now being described in England that to my knowledge have no precedent in Scripture or in the Great Awakening, but perhaps Warner would be equally critical.

I am forced to ask after reading this book how we are to test whether this is of the Lord. We live in an age in which such events are seen in new age groups etc. Testing is not as easy as it may sound as Edwards acknowledged. In spite of caveats and concerns we can perhaps take physical manifestations such as falling down and laughing as essentially

neutral theologically – the position Edwards took. We then need to look for the fruit of the Spirit, an increased desire to serve the Lord, increased awareness of sinfulness and of the extraordinary character of God's saving grace, and when we see these results we should give praise to his name alone and not to any place or to any particular teacher.

*Rev. Dr Paul Gardner, Northwich,  
Cheshire.*

### Stairways to Heaven?: God in World Religions

David Smith

Edinburgh, Rutherford House, 1995,  
31pp, £2.50

ISBN 0 946063 57 7

This is a welcome, and able contribution to the Rutherford House 'Cutting Edge' series. It is a concise and easily accessible discussion of one of the most pressing issues facing contemporary Christianity.

David Smith, Principle of Northumberland Bible College and a former missionary in Nigeria, takes seriously the apostolic insistence that God has not left himself without a witness. In a brief, but informed, examination of 'primal religions' (not 'primitive' or 'animistic' religions, since such terms suggest a 'lower form' of religion), the Indian religious tradition and Islam, he finds in varying degrees, traces of an awareness of a transcendent, personal, creator God. Even in atheistic traditions, such as Theravada Buddhism, there are later developments which demonstrate the desire to encounter a personal, loving deity. The argument, therefore, is that people of other faith communities should not be viewed wholly negatively, but rather as those who are, in some limited measure, responding to God's general revelation. Having said that, he does not compromise the uniqueness and finality of Christ, or stray from the biblical text into abstract and fanciful speculation.

Of particular importance is Smith's plea for a 'radical humility'. Christians, remembering that they are saved by grace, must avoid the imperialist mentality which talks down to those of other faith communities. Recognising that God has not abandoned those of other faiths, and that they have much to offer, we humbly point them to Christ. I can think of very few Christians who would not benefit from reading this

helpful booklet, an excellent text for discussion groups.

*Chris Partridge, Chester.*

### A New Deal For Social Welfare

Bob Holman

Oxford, Lion, 1993, 109pp, £5.99

ISBN 0 7459 2848 X

This slim book is no lightweight when it comes to ideas. Bob Holman has written a powerful critique of New Right thinking and the influence on social welfare provision. It is the more impressive as Bob, who was professor of Social Administration at Bath University, has for many years lived and worked on family welfare in a Glasgow housing estate. The author's concern is that social welfare is changing from being a caring ethic to a contractual enterprise.

According to the politics of the New Right, society develops best through competition and the free market of private enterprise. Holman, however, argues that the so called free market is oriented around the affluent and the middle class. Through the promotion of personal gain over redistribution and sharing, the market bows before Mammon. Holman challenges the New Right's assumptions that state services are inefficient, private enterprise promotes democracy and competition always leads to greater efficiency.

The influence of the New Right is discernible in legislation, restriction of local government budgets and in promoting private enterprise managers in the social services. With plenty of experience in the field, the author criticises managerial Social Work of, amongst other concerns, distancing practitioners and clients from effective decision making. There is a vacuum of values in social work today. The British Association of Social Workers make strong statements on gender and ethnic issues but are criticised for failing to relate their principles to how we live our lives.

Drawing upon the Christian principles of Richard Tawney's 'fraternity' and George Lansbury's 'comradeship', the author finds 'mutuality' as the best description for a sense of oneness based upon a common purpose. Mutuality, as an alternative value base, is based upon a common kinship and emphasises our responsibility for the well-being of others.

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There is a prophetic note sounded here to all churches and Christians involved in providing social welfare and community care. We need to apply this principle in areas of social need to creative initiatives that give quality support and employment. The relevance of this 'neighbour principle' for the individual is to go beyond the question 'Who is my neighbour?' and be a good neighbour.

*Rev. Robert Calvert, Rotterdam*

### **Bridges of the Spirit: Stories of mission and ministry across cultures today**

Maureen Edwards ed.  
London, SPCK, 1994, £6.99  
ISBN 0 281 04770 7

This is a very readable collection of some twenty examples of mission work in a variety of cultural contexts. Twelve examples focus on missionaries sent from Britain to Third World countries in Africa and South America. Common themes include integrating evangelism and social action, ensuring critical reflection on cultural baggage carried when engaged in mission and caring for the poor.

One European example highlighted Spain where ecumenism in a traditional Roman Catholic setting brought true and lasting fruits. Five accounts of missionaries sent to Britain make interesting points. Missionaries from Sierra Leone, Jamaica and Brazil found, to their surprising cost, instances of racism, prejudice and oppressiveness of spirit.

The book has a number of weaknesses. In a few instances, cultural sensitivity in mission is at the expense of the uniqueness of Christ. For one missionary to Sri Lanka, understanding Buddhism meant 'entering' it and concluding that 'all religions are unique'. In Wolverhampton, inter faith meetings led to common worship services. Bible study discussion material is weakened by a similar tendency. To critically appraise western culture is one thing; to suspend that faculty in respect of other cultures for the sake of tolerance and peace is another.

These limitations notwithstanding, this book could be a useful stimulant to a congregation's missionary awareness at home and abroad.

*Andrew McKie, Aberdeen*

### **The New Testament, Psalms & Proverbs, New International Version, Inclusive Language Edition**

London, Hodder & Staughton, 1995,  
419pp, £14.99  
ISBN 0 340 61065 4

Is this new edition of the NIV simply an example of ecclesiastical political correctness? The answer is probably no and yes. Let it be clear that this is not an attempt of radical feminists to turn God into 'our Mother', the masculine pronouns for God have properly been retained (though I trust that no one takes this to mean that God is male!). However, male pronouns have been replaced with more inclusive phrases in the instances where reference is clearly made to human beings in general. Thus *Psalm 1:1* becomes 'Blessed are those who do not walk in the counsel of the wicked.'

The most obvious changes are seen in the letters where, for example, 'brothers' becomes 'brothers and sisters', a positive change from a pastoral point of view, and one that also does better justice to the meaning of the Greek term *adelphoi*.

Having said all this, the original sense of the words in the standard NIV is inclusive, and should be explained as such in preaching and teaching. So do we really need yet another English Bible version among the bewildering array already facing us, particularly when we consider how many people in the world do not yet have any kind of Bible in their own language?

*Revd Alistair Wilson, Inverness*

### **Homosexuality in the Church: Both sides of the Debate**

Jeffrey S Siker ed.  
Westminster John Knox Press, 1994,  
211pp,  
ISBN 0 664 25545 0

Anyone contemplating the Western Church at the close of the twentieth century cannot fail to be impressed by the way in which issues connected with human sexuality have come to the fore of the agenda in all mainline denominations. Much of the discussion with regard to female presbyterial ordination raised deep issues of gender and sex and now that that particular concern has been largely settled it was inevitable that attention should turn to the vexed question of homosexuality and lesbianism. This has now become a major theological and pastoral problem and all those concerned to address the issue from an evangelical position would be wise to buy this particular book.

This book is particularly challenging for both those who are supportive of inclusive same-sex relationships to be recognised, blessed and encouraged in the Christian Church and for those who are convinced that such a step would be to silence Scripture and to introduce schism. Mr Siker is, after all, trying to present both sides of the debate but whether any consensus can be reached is extremely doubtful. The main contention of the affirming lobby is that Scripture is silent on homosexual/lesbian monogamous, loving and consenting relationships. To my mind it is essential that evangelicals grapple with this issue. It is not going to go away. And this book is to be commended for all those who wish to understand the debate more fully.

*Revd Dr Nigel Atkinson, Oxford*

### **Four Gospels, One Jesus?**

Richard A Burridge  
London, SPCK, 1994, 191pp, £7.99  
ISBN 0 281 04778 0

Throughout life we encounter people in many different circumstances. If these were to share their vast range of anecdotes and experiences the complete stranger would gain a full picture of our lives. Similarly, Burridge argues, the gospel authors have given to the Church a many faceted understanding of Christ.

This study condenses large areas of scholarship in an attractive and palatable presentation. Applying to Christ the four traditional symbols for the gospels – Matthew the human teacher, Mark the roaring lion; Luke the burden bearing ox; John the high flying eagle – Burridge shows how the background and purpose of the authors shaped their writing. The distinctive of each gospel are outlined, yet the convincing conclusion is that we have four consistent portraits of the same Lord.

One aspect leads to concern, the assertion that in these 'interpretative biographies' the authors recorded events and words which may not have happened quite as reported. Many will conclude that the implications of this position lead to an undermining of the authority of the gospels. These records depend upon historical accuracy as well as spiritual, moral and philosophical truth.

With this one important caution I thoroughly recommend this book and will use it as I continue preaching the gospels. It is full of insight and seed thoughts. It is marked by an emphasis that study must lead to faith and devotion. Anyone who loves the gospels will delight in it.

*Rev. Peter Fleming, Lifford, Co. Donegal*

## Book Reviews

### **Brushing up on Believing: A Fresh Look at Basic Christianity & Prayer**

Sheila Brown and Gavin Reid  
Oxford, Bible Reading Fellowship,  
1994, 128pp, £4.99  
ISBN 0 7459 2929 9

This most attractively produced offering for the Decade of Evangelism contains a lot to help newer Christians or those seeking to brush up on essentials. In two parts, the book has six chapters on basic doctrines and six on the Lord's Prayer. There are helpful illustrations by Taffy. Designed equally for group or individual study, group material, prayers and meditations are to be found at the end of each chapter. It complements another book by the authors, 'Lights that Shine', on evangelism.

The intention has been to give the book a popular style accessible to a wide variety of people. In this, I suspect, it has partially failed. The flavour here is middle-class, evangelical Anglican. Many will feel at home with the likes of Kermit the Frog and James Herriot, but it is assumed that the reader is comfortable with a world populated by such as Toulouse Lautrec, CS Lewis and Leonard Bernstein. One esoteric illustration begins: 'A university professor was about to preach the annual Bedmakers' Sermon to the college servants...'

The people who are going to be helped by this are graduates and those who read quality newspapers. That is a pity, because the content is excellent.

*Rev David Sladden, Huntingdon*

### **Alzheimers – Caring for your Loved One, Caring for Yourself**

Sharon Fish  
London, Lion, £7.99  
ISBN 0 7459 2135 3

Alzheimer's Disease has been described as the 'Silent Epidemic' and is undoubtedly one of the most significant illnesses of our time. As the population ages the number of families with a loved one affected steadily increases, and the importance of an understanding of the condition becomes increasingly apparent.

This book makes a major contribution to the information available to those most involved and is one of the clearest and most helpful publications I have seen. It is written, consistently, from a Christian viewpoint, but it is in no sense a religious tract. The faith expressed is as realistic, practical and even as pragmatic as the clinical approach of the book. The term 'Loved One' in the title is relevant, since much of the emphasis is upon the loving which is needed to do the caring in this kind of way. Such love will never lose

respect for the person, no matter how deteriorated they may become.

Alzheimer's Disease is recognised as affecting more than the primary sufferer and it is rightly recognised as a family affair. The first section of the book 'Something Has Gone Wrong', draws upon the experience of carers in the observation of the early signs of dementia, and clarifies much of the bewildering progression of brain failure from that experience. The need to face facts is addressed, and many of the facts are set out in a way which can only be helpful to the reader in recognising and facing them.

Part two, on 'Caring For Your Loved One' makes realistic suggestions, most of them, again, illustrated from experience. Memory loss, loss of emotional control, wandering and baffling irrational behaviour are analysed, illustrated and suggestions are made for their handling with a consistent recognition that each individual will present a different clinical picture. Safety is an important issue and, while some of the accounts of the hazards are, to say the least hair-raising, the recognition that dangers do exist and that they may be avoided by forethought and practical action is timely and necessary.

Part three, 'Caring For Yourself', is possibly the section which makes this book most useful and helpful for the carer. There is a real danger that the person caring for an Alzheimer's Disease patient will set his or her needs as secondary to those of the sufferer, and may thus risk becoming less able to care. Isolation is recognised as a risk and the people who may help, including self-help groups are recognised as a necessary asset for any carer.

The emotions of the carer are equally often subjugated to the demands of the patient and the expression of these, perhaps especially by a Christian carer, may even be seen as a betrayal of the loved one. Open and explicit recognition of these emotions, even the negative emotions, is the first step to being able to handle them, and the fears, anxieties, anger, depression, resentment and even a sense of rejection which may assail the carer at times require to be understood, accepted and countered.

The fourth part 'Saying Goodbye' includes the partial mourning of relinquishing care to others where this becomes necessary, discussing the options and guiding the decisions. There is a feeling that in this context much of the mourning is progressive and pre-mortem, but death itself is not ignored and the difficulties of letting go are balanced by the clear message that there is never a time when there is 'nothing we can do'. In Alzheimer's disease the valley of the shadow of death may be a

long one, but we do require to be reminded that we need not walk there alone, whether as a patient or a carer. The element of Christian hope is nowhere more supportive.

There is always tension in recommending such a book. It is honest about the outlook and therefore, in measure, pessimistic but at the same time it is positive about the caring and helpful to the carer in doing so. One worries about the effect of having the problems so clearly spelled out, some of them not yet encountered in the specific situation, yet concerned that the carer should have such a valuable resource to which to turn for counsel, clarification and comfort. On balance, I believe the considerable value of this book outweighs the problems and I intend to pass it on to a carer, provided I can get it back.

*Dr George L Chalmers, Glasgow*

### **An Introduction to the Christian Faith** ed. Robin Keeley

Oxford, Lynx, new edition 1992, 346pp,  
£9.95, ISBN 0 7459 2384 4

This is the former *Lion Handbook of Christian Beliefs* to which have been added Bible references, questions for further thinking and some splendid margin quotes (motto on city bullion dealer's notepaper: 'Ingot we trust').

The book is in six sections: How can we know?, Jesus, God, Creation, A New Creation and a new section of key thinkers and movements through the centuries. The latter starts with the Apostolic Fathers and proceeds via the Reformation to Kung, the Charismatic movement and Liberation Theology.

Robin Keeley has pulled together 94 contributors from 20 countries across the denominations. A thirteen page glossary (Adoptionist...Anglican...ontological...zealot) precedes an adequate index.

Who is the interested readership? The self-identification is 'a textbook for college, home or study group' rather than the interested outsider, and certainly this identifies the general approach which is more educational and apologetic than evangelistic. Assuming it might be a book I would give to a seeking neighbour I looked up 'Atonement' to see George Carey's gentlemanly apologetic for substitution rather than Jesus shining as good news from, say, Packer's pen. The language is undergraduate polysyllabic rather than housing scheme accessible; the theological stance broadly evangelical.

It would not therefore be a first choice for most convicted seekers. Judged by its own criteria however, this introduction is a quite admirable first year university guidebook to epistemology, Christian apologetics, dogmatics and the history of Christian thought.

*Rev Peter White, Glasgow Bible College.*